

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5373

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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USMISSION OECD PARIS

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E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: ESTIMATE OF OVER QUARTER MILLION IDLED IN ONE-DAY PROTEST ACTION AGAINST INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT.

REF: LONDON 12414

SUMMARY: THE ONE-DAY STRIKE, NOVEMBER 5, CALLED BY AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW) TO PROTEST AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT AND A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPECIFIC 75,000 POUNDS CONTEMPT CITATION BY THE NATIONAL

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT (REFTEL), IDLED ABOUT 264,000 WORKERS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF UNITED KINGDOM ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES. RESPONSE TO THE AUEW CALL FROM ITS OWN MEMBERS OR FROM OTHER UNIONS WAS VERY UNEVEN, ALTHOUGH THE AUTO INDUSTRY WAS SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED AS WERE THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED IN LONDON. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO AN OFFICIAL SPOESMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT, ABOUT 264,000 WORKERS TOOK PART IN THE STRIKE ORGANIZED BY THE AUEW IN A GENERAL PROTEST AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT AND, IN PARTICULAR, A RECENT CONTEMPT CITATION OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

COURT (NIRC) BECAUSE OF THE UNION'S REFUSAL TO HALT A STRIKE AT AN ENGINEERING PLANT IN SURREY (REFTEL). THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT ESTIMATED THAT 79,000 WORKERS STOPPED WORK IN THE NORTHWEST, 67,000 IN THE WEST MIDLANDS, 38,000 IN THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN REGION, 26,000 IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE, AND 35,000 IN LONDON AND THE SOUTHEAST.

2. LONDON STOPPAGES PREVENTED THE PRINTING OF ANY LONDON-PUBLISHED NATIONAL OR EVENING NEWSPAPER. PARTICULARLY HARD HIT WAS THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY, INCLUDING BRITISH LEYLAND AT BIRMINGHAM AND OXFORD; FORD AT DAGENHAM AND MERSEYSIDE AND TRIUMPH AT LIVERPOOL. AIRCRAFT WORKERS IN BRISTOL, BUILDING WORKERS AT MERSEYSIDE AND STEELWORKERS EMPLOYED BY THE BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION WERE ALSO IDLED BY THE PROTEST.

3. COMMENT: DESPITE ITS EFFECT ON THE AUTO INDUSTRY AND ON NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION, THE PROTEST ACTION WAS BY NO MEANS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. THE AUEW HAS ABOUT 1,400,000 MEMBERS, BUT IT DID NOT SUCCEED IN CONVINCING A MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS TO SUPPORT THE STRIKE, OR MANY MEMBERS OF OTHER UNIONS. MOREOVER SOME OF THE PROTEST RALLIES, INCLUDING ONE IN MANCHESTER, ATTRACTED FEW PARTICIPANTS. AN AUEW OFFICIAL CLAIMS THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT FIGURES ON WORKERS IDLED IN THE PROTEST REPRESENT SIMPLY "AN EDUCATED GUESS" AND THAT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN REALITY, THERE WERE FAR MORE WHO RESPONDED TO THE UNION'S CALL. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT OPINION WITHIN THE UNION IS DIVIDED ON THE MERITS OF THIS FORM OF PROTEST AGAINST THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT. (ALTHOUGH THE TUC STRONGLY OPPOSED THE LAW, IT DOES NOT SUPPORT A BOYCOTT OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COURT.) A DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT HE CONSIDERED SUCH "POLITICAL STRIKES" AS THE AUEW'S JURY OF

PROTEST AS HAVING LITTLE SOLID RANK AND FILE SUPPORT. IN
HIS VIEW IMMEDIATE "BREAD AND BUTTER" ISSUES ARE THE REAL
CONCERN OF WORKERS ON THE SHOP FLOOR.

ANNENBERG

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